In a future world, North America has been destroyed and the continent is now divided into 12 regions. The capital of the nation, Panem, is in the Rocky Mountains and the remaining 12 districts are spread in descending order throughout the continent. Katniss lives in District 12, the last district, in what we call as the Appalachian Mountains. The closer you are to the Capital, the better off your district is. District 12 is in charge of mining coal and as the last district, they are exceedingly poor. Starvation is a way of life and ever since Katniss’ father died in a mining accident, she has been in charge of caring for her mother and 12 year old sister, Prim.

The capital is bent on reminding the districts who is boss. They do this by hosting the annual Hunger Games, which are held to ensure that no district makes an attempt at a rebellion or uprising. In the Hunger Games, each district is supposed to give one male and one female child between the ages of 12 and 18 for the annual event. The competitors are chosen by drawing out of a cup. Families can buy more food and supplies for the year if they purchase additional entries into the games. So basically, the poorer you are the more likely it is that you have dozens of entries in the mix. The entries add up each year, so there are children with dozens of entries in the mix. Those who are rich have fewer entries, with some only responsible for one entry. (In other districts, wealthier ones, children train to participate in the Games. These “Careers” see the games as an honor).

Ever since her father’s death, Katniss has been forced to purchase extra entries to help her mother and Prim. This (and her talent for illegal hunting) has allowed them to survive. Each year she hopes and prays that she is not picked but this year is different...Prim is old enough to be entered. Katniss wouldn’t let her buy extra entries, so she only has one entry into the games. When Prim’s name is drawn, Katniss immediately volunteers to take her place, an old custom that has not been called into action in District 12 in many years.

Katniss and Peeta, the two competitors chosen from District 12, are brought to the Capital, where they receive stylists, makeovers, interview coaching, and gourmet food. While Peeta and Katniss slowly become friends and come to terms with their fate, they also realize that in order for one of them to survive, they must kill the other. In the Hunger Games leave the 24 competitors in a secret location (desert, tundra, etc) and the competitors must fight to the death while the entire nation watches live on TV. The sole survivor wins food and supplies for their district for the next year, and set themselves up for life.